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Twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1537 (2004) of 30 March 2004, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for an additional period of six months, until 30 September 2004. In the same resolution, the Council approved my recommendation that a residual UNAMSIL presence remain in Sierra Leone, for an initial period of six months from 1 January 2005, and requested me to proceed with the necessary planning to ensure a seamless transition from the current configuration of UNAMSIL to its residual presence. In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the Council requested me to provide by 15 September 2004 a progress report, including progress made in the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, progress made in resolving the conflict in Liberia, further increases in the capability of the Sierra Leone police and armed forces and progress made in strengthening cooperation among United Nations missions in the subregion, with recommendations for any modifications that such progress might allow to the size, composition, duration and benchmarks of the residual UNAMSIL presence. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. It also describes the state of planning for the transition of UNAMSIL to its residual presence and the progress made in the Mission's drawdown, and provides an assessment of the security situation.

II. Security situation

2. On 29 June 2004, UNAMSIL suffered a tragic loss of lives when an MI-8 UNAMSIL civil contractor helicopter carrying 24 United Nations and non-United Nations personnel, including 14 members of the Pakistani contingent, one member of the Bangladeshi contingent and three crew members, crashed in Sierra Leone while conducting a regular flight from Hastings to Yengema. While the Mission immediately deployed rescue efforts involving considerable material and human resources, there were no survivors. Following the crash, the remains of all 24 passengers and crew members were recovered, and formal identification was completed by 4 July. The remains of the victims of the crash were repatriated but the investigation is ongoing. I would like to take this opportunity to once again extend my deep condolences to the families and Governments of those who perished in this tragedy.

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3. During the period under review, the overall security situation in Sierra Leone remained generally stable, which facilitated the further consolidation of the peace process. This stability has enabled UNAMSIL to proceed with its drawdown, and to hand over primary responsibility for security in the Eastern province to the Government of Sierra Leone on 4 August. The Government of Sierra Leone and UNAMSIL have continued to hold joint weekly meetings within the framework of the National Security Council Coordinating Group to evaluate the security situation. The Mission has also continued to monitor the effectiveness of the district and provincial security committees established by the Government that provide a framework for cooperation among the Sierra Leone police, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the local authorities on security matters. The provincial security committees have functioned more effectively than the district committees, and the Government is expected to take steps to improve the performance of these important entities.

4. Since my report to the Security Council of 6 July 2004 (S/2004/536), the relationship between RSLAF and the Sierra Leone police has improved. Indeed, there are encouraging signs that the leadership of both RSLAF and the Sierra Leone police are taking measures to improve mutual collaboration. In a joint communiqué issued on 9 August, the Inspector General of Police and the Chief of the Defence Staff reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring greater cooperation between the two forces.

5. There have been no significant security threats against the Special Court for Sierra Leone since it commenced trials on 3 June 2004. However, there is a concern that, as the trials continue, there could be an increased risk of threats against its staff and facilities by elements hostile to its operations.

6. The situation in Liberia has been gradually stabilizing as progress has been made in the peace process. Nonetheless, the security situation in the border areas remains volatile, with reports of alleged arms smuggling into Liberia from Sierra Leone, possibly aimed at taking advantage of the ongoing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Liberia. In particular, in recent weeks, the Sierra Leone police have prevented attempts to smuggle ammunition into Liberia. The security environment along the border with Guinea is also of concern in the light of reports that some elements of the Guinean armed forces stationed in the area are harassing Sierra Leonean civilians. In this regard, the meeting on 5 August in Conakry between the internal affairs ministers of Guinea and Sierra Leone to seek ways to resolve the boundary dispute in the area of the border town of Yenga was a welcome development. On 2 September, President Tejan Kabbah met his Guinean counterpart, President Lansana Conté, in Conakry to discuss the issue of Yenga. The two Heads of State agreed that the village of Yenga belonged to Sierra Leone in accordance with the 1912 Treaty signed between France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. On 6 September, at a meeting between the ministers of interior of Guinea and Sierra Leone held in Guinea, it was agreed that joint investigation and technical committees would be established to prepare reports on the Yenga issue for consideration by the two Governments in the coming weeks.

7. While the overall security environment in the country remains relatively stable, youth unemployment, inadequate private sector growth, spiraling prices of essential commodities and very slow progress in improving the standard of living of the majority of the population remain areas of serious concern. Notwithstanding

these challenges, there has been no major increase in crime or unrest in areas vacated by UNAMSIL troops, although the Mission continues to maintain its presence in most major towns. In addition, UNAMSIL military observers are still deployed in areas vacated by the force. The Mission has also continued to deploy force reserves to areas of potential volatility, such as the Kamakwie area in Bombali district, where there has been a large influx of diamond miners from eastern areas following the discovery of new diamond-mining sites. The United Nations force reserves are also periodically deployed to areas where primary responsibility for security has been transferred to the Government's security forces.

III. Implementation of the drawdown plan

8. The adjusted timetable for the drawdown of UNAMSIL troops, described in section IV of my twenty-second report on UNAMSIL (S/2004/536), remains on track. In August, the Pakistani aviation unit that was based in Hastings, and the Zambian battalion, previously deployed in Tongo, were repatriated. The role of the incoming Ghanaian battalion, which will be deployed in Bo, has been adjusted, with an airmobile company designated as the immediate force reserve and the bulk of the battalion earmarked as the second force reserve. As planned, by the end of December, the strength of the Mission will be reduced to fewer than 5,000 troops, of which some 1,500 military personnel will be retained for up to two months to provide logistical support and a seamless transition to the Mission's residual presence. By the end of February 2005, it is expected that the force strength will be 3,250 troops (including 66 staff officers) and 141 United Nations military observers. The reduction of the military strength will be accompanied by a concomitant reduction of the civilian staff in UNAMSIL in 2004 and 2005.

9. During the forthcoming few months, UNAMSIL is expected to hand over to the Government primary responsibility for security of the western area of the country, the only area that remains under its full responsibility. The Government of Sierra Leone will then have assumed the primary role for security nationwide, with UNAMSIL playing a supporting role by early 2005.

10. The transfer of security responsibility for various areas of Sierra Leone to the Government has been preceded by numerous joint training exercises conducted by UNAMSIL and the Government forces, including joint Sierra Leone police and RSLAF exercises in riot and insurgency control. These ongoing exercises have been focusing on priority areas where improvement in the performance of the Sierra Leonean security services is still needed. In the meantime, together with the Office of National Security, UNAMSIL is planning a joint exercise schedule with the Government security forces to establish and test a national security contingency framework.

IV. Planning of the transition to the residual Mission presence and its benchmarks

11. In its resolution 1537 (2004), the Security Council requested me to provide recommendations for any modifications to the size, composition, duration and benchmarks of the residual UNAMSIL presence. In my report dated 19 March 2004 (S/2004/228), I indicated that the post-UNAMSIL presence would address some

remaining core tasks, including assisting the Government of Sierra Leone to effectively assume its responsibilities for the security sector. The report also reiterated that it would be essential to strike a balance between the necessity to transfer primary responsibility for national security to the Government and the need for the United Nations to disengage in a manner that would ensure that the key security benchmarks designed to facilitate long-term security and stability in the country are met.

12. Despite the considerable efforts of the Government and the United Kingdom-led International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), several factors continue to hamper the operational effectiveness of both the Sierra Leone police and RSLAF. As was noted in my previous reports, RSLAF is facing serious logistic, communications, accommodation and transport shortfalls, and other challenges. Unless these are adequately addressed, the security sector of the country will not be able to assume full security responsibilities in the future. In the light of these concerns, the attainment by RSLAF of the requisite capacity to assume effective responsibility for ensuring the security of the country against external threats will remain a key benchmark in reviewing the tasks of the residual UNAMSIL presence.

13. Prior to completion of the drawdown of the UNAMSIL military component, which is currently expected by the end of 2005, RSLAF should have developed a realistic and achievable mission that is clearly understood by all ranks. It is recommended that, by that time, the armed forces should have — as a minimum — one infantry company per brigade, which would be fully operational, with a full complement of vehicles, radios and the requisite accommodation, and with an ability to deploy within 48 hours into border areas to prevent armed incursions. In addition, a fully operational infantry battalion should be available to deploy with infantry brigades anywhere in the country in support of the Sierra Leone police within 24 hours. The army would also need to establish a reliable military communications system capable of ensuring effective coordination and control of troops deployed nationwide.

14. The Mission will continue to support the Government's efforts to reach these admittedly very ambitious goals, which will need special attention in three main areas. First, Operation Pebu, the military barracks building programme conducted with the assistance of UNAMSIL, must have made significant progress. The completion date for all Pebu projects has now been revised to 2009; however, its two major sites in the eastern province are expected to be completed in 2005, if current funding shortfalls are met in a timely manner. A second challenge is the acquisition of the sorely-needed communications and mobility assets for RSLAF, which would also need generous donor support. In addition, the first training cycle for RSLAF, supported by IMATT, led by the United Kingdom, needs to be completed as expected by November 2005. The attainment of these goals would give RSLAF sufficient capacity in the eastern border areas to warrant the scaling-down of support by the UNAMSIL residual presence.

15. With regard to the Sierra Leone police force, by the end of 2005 it should have completed all planned deployments to the provinces, including the provision of accommodation for its personnel and reorganization of its deployment in the western area; it should attain its planned level of 9,500 personnel, which is expected by mid-2005; and it should ensure that its units are adequately equipped before the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. This is another important benchmark for the UNAMSIL

residual presence, which will require the retention of some 80 of the 130 United Nations civilian police personnel, who are currently deployed. It is also expected that, by the end of 2004, the Government's provincial and district security committees will be functioning more effectively.

16. The conclusion of the work of the Special Court will constitute another important milestone in reviewing the tasks to be carried out by the UNAMSIL residual presence. In that regard, the Mission, together with Government forces, will continue to provide security support to the Court, as requested by it. It is currently expected that the Court will complete its work during the second half of 2005.

17. Another important drawdown benchmark relates to the full deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), especially in the areas close to the country's border with Sierra Leone. Progress is being made towards this benchmark with the full deployment of UNMIL in north-western Liberia. As UNMIL consolidates its presence in those areas, a resultant decrease in potential security threats should warrant a review — sometime in 2005 — of the level of support to RSLAF in the border areas in Sierra Leone.

18. Such a review should consider the overall assessment of the above-mentioned benchmarks, which, in my view, should be conducted by mid-2005, with a view to determining further adjustments in the military, civilian police and civilian components of the Mission. In this regard, much would depend on the progress made in the operational effectiveness of the security forces, and in particular RSLAF. In the meantime, should a security situation arise that RSLAF were unable to cope with, the residual UNAMSIL force might be required to provide troop and equipment reinforcements at short notice, including helicopters.

V. Overall progress in the normalization of the situation in Sierra Leone

A. Strengthening the capacity of the Sierra Leone police

19. With the support of UNAMSIL and the Commonwealth team, 397 additional police recruits are currently undergoing basic training at the Police Training School in Hastings. As at 1 September 2004, 1,777 police recruits had been trained and deployed, bringing the strength of the Sierra Leone police to 7,903. Despite the recruitment of new personnel, the overall strength of the Sierra Leone police has not increased during the reporting period since more than 400 police officers, including the Special Constabulary, have retired since July. It is expected, however, that the strength of 8,200 police personnel could be attained by the end of December, and the projected total of 9,500 by mid-2005.

20. The Mission has also continued to provide in-service training for the Sierra Leone police in order to raise its professional standards. Some 900 police officers have been trained in basic computer skills, 75 in fingerprinting techniques, 100 in file management, 3,000 in human rights, and 50 in community policing. In addition, 121 police officers have undergone courses to qualify as trainers. It is also expected that by December 2004, 300 special mentors will have been trained. Additionally, several hundred police personnel have been trained to operate various types of vehicles.

21. With the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNAMSIL has completed the construction of police barracks in Koidu and Koindu in the Eastern Province. In addition, UNAMSIL continued to assist in the construction of barracks at Motema, Jendema, Makeni, Kamakwie, Tongo, Daru, Segbwema and Kailahun, also with UNDP funding. This project is expected to be completed by the end of 2004. The expansion of the Police Training School in Hastings, which is nearing completion, will allow for the simultaneous training of up to 600 police recruits. Meanwhile, the Bo and Makeni police training centres are fully operational, and it is envisaged that the Kenema regional training centre will be completed by December.

B. Strengthening the capacity of the armed forces

22. As described in paragraphs 12 to 14 above, the operational effectiveness of RSLAF remains insufficient. The shortfalls in equipment have been further exacerbated by the serious deterioration of the already dilapidated vehicle fleet and a paucity of spare parts. Vehicle availability in the armed forces currently stands at approximately 35 per cent of existing needs, and the serviceable vehicle fleet can operationally support only two infantry companies. In addition, many border patrols conducted by the Sierra Leone troops are deployed without full communications capacity. Cellular phones are often used as the primary form of communication at the operational level.

23. Many senior military officers acknowledge the primacy of the Sierra Leone police in maintaining law and order throughout the country. However, fundamental misconceptions persist and there is widespread frustration in RSLAF ranks over their not being assigned a more prominent role in State security. While RSLAF are generally well-prepared and closely mentored by IMATT, the armed forces have not yet obtained the resources or sustained financial support to be fully operationally effective. As a result, their morale needs to be improved considerably. The situation is compounded by the continuing public mistrust regarding the troops' loyalty to the Government.

24. In the meantime, RSLAF and IMATT have decided to focus on Pujehun and Kailahun districts in erecting barracks through Operation Pebu, as described in paragraph 14 above, with UNAMSIL providing assistance as needed. In addition to the recent contribution of £5.1 million by the United Kingdom to support the communication and logistical needs of the army, it is encouraging that the United Kingdom is also reviewing its contribution to Operation Pebu, with a possible provision of further financial support to speed up this important programme. This generous support from the United Kingdom is most helpful and other potential donors are strongly encouraged to give consideration to providing the much-needed assistance towards building the capacity of RSLAF, particularly in the cited areas of infrastructure and communications.

25. As announced by the Government in December 2003, a further reduction of 1,000 military personnel from RSLAF will commence on 1 January 2005, towards the planned goal of a strength of 10,500 personnel by 2007. There have been some public protests among military personnel against the expected downsizing. In collaboration with IMATT, UNAMSIL will continue its efforts to strengthen the

capacity of RSLAF and will play an advisory role and provide training assistance to the armed forces in selected areas.

C. Consolidation of State authority

26. The Government has made significant strides in enhancing good governance in Sierra Leone through an ongoing process of decentralization of State administrative structures. The establishment of local councils nationwide is an important achievement towards the restoration of the system of local government. However, financial constraints and poor infrastructure are hindering the performance of local councils, including their provision of services to the local population.

27. The United Nations country team has established transitional support structures to assist the Government of Sierra Leone. In collaboration with the Decentralization Secretariat in the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, these entities are redesigning developmental coordination mechanisms in the districts and identifying training needs for capacity-building of local councils with the aim of supporting them in creating district development plans for 2005. The United Nations transitional support teams are currently covering the areas of Bo, Pujehun, Moyamba, Kabala, Port Loko, Magburaka and Bonthe, with UNAMSIL providing office space for them.

D. Reintegration of ex-combatants

28. With the completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone, the focus has now shifted from the target group of ex-combatants to young people in general. In this regard, UNAMSIL is collaborating with UNDP and other partners towards capacity-building aimed at implementing special programmes for young people. At the same time, in collaboration with the United Nations country team, UNAMSIL continues to encourage the ongoing community arms-for-development programme. The Mission also works closely with UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) regarding the Sierra Leone ex-combatants who will be demobilized in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, UNAMSIL is collaborating with the United Nations country team and the Government to ensure the earliest possible launching of programmes for the reintegration of any Sierra Leonean combatants who will be returning from Liberia. In the meantime, there is widespread concern in Sierra Leone about the security problems that many of these former combatants could pose should they opt to return outside an organized repatriation programme.

E. Restoration of Government control over diamond mining

29. The Government of Sierra Leone has continued to enhance its control over diamond mining. From January to July 2004, official exports of diamonds totalled $81 million, compared with $42 million during the same period in 2003. During the period under review, new diamond sites were identified around Kamakwie, which has prompted the influx of some 15,000 miners to the area in recent weeks (see paragraph 7 above). Although the discovery of new diamond sites is a source of much-needed employment, the movement of a large number of miners has posed

new challenges. Given the proximity of the area to the border with Guinea and the security implications of such a massive influx of people from the east to the northern part of the country, the Government has deployed mining inspection officers, as well as additional Sierra Leone police officers, and has established registration offices to ascertain the identities of the new settlers and to help control the entry of foreigners into the area. UNAMSIL has also deployed its military personnel into the area to assist the Sierra Leone police in ensuring security.

VI. Human rights, national reconciliation and justice

A. Monitoring and promotion of human rights

30. The human rights situation in Sierra Leone has gradually improved during the period under review as a result of the sustained training and sensitization efforts of UNAMSIL, in partnership with the Government and local human rights organizations. The justice system has gradually improved its performance with regard to respect for human rights by the police and prison authorities. On 30 July, the Sierra Leone Parliament passed an act establishing the National Human Rights Commission, based on a draft law jointly prepared by UNAMSIL and civil society groups. The Government is developing an implementation plan for the Commission. A Law Reform Commission has been established to review existing laws and to make recommendations for the repeal, amendment or re-enactment of new laws.

31. Notwithstanding the above, the entire justice system needs urgent reform to address the problems of the inadequate number of judges, magistrates and justices of the peace; the lack of access to current legislation and jurisprudence in codified form; respect for human rights in the administration of justice; and the lack of resources. The combined effect of these problems has resulted in a huge backlog of cases and prolonged detentions. Civil society in the country remains weak and needs continuing assistance to improve national capacity to promote and protect human rights.

32. The Mission has continued to draw the attention of the Government to persistent delays in criminal investigations and in the compilation and transfer of case files to court for appropriate judicial process. On 21 July, 64 former members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and 33 of the so-called West Side Boys, who had been in detention in Pademba prison for over three years, rioted to protest yet another postponement of their court appearances. The Sierra Leone police brought the situation under control. Following this incident, on 21 August, the Government decided to release 16 of the West Side Boys following advice from the international community and as an indication of its willingness to meet internationally accepted standards of justice.

B. Protection of children

33. The Mission, in cooperation with UNICEF and child protection non-governmental organizations in Sierra Leone, continues to engage with its counterparts in Liberia to ensure that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Liberia pays particular attention to the repatriation and reintegration of Sierra Leonean children associated with the Liberian fighting forces,

as well as Liberian child ex-combatants currently in Sierra Leone. In this regard, the International Committee for the Red Cross has identified an initial group of Sierra Leonean children who were associated with the Liberian fighting forces, and has started the process of family tracing and reunification and their eventual reintegration into their communities.

34. At the request of the Government, UNAMSIL and UNICEF have also carried out a review of the juvenile justice system in Sierra Leone. It is anticipated that the recommendations of the review will assist the Government in strengthening the framework for the protection of children, particularly through the issuance of clear-practice directives by the Inspector General of Police and the Chief Justice to their respective organizations. These directives will serve as a temporary measure while comprehensive legislative reform is being carried out. UNAMSIL continues to support the national steering committee for child rights training for RSLAF and the Sierra Leone police, particularly in the development of training materials for the police. UNAMSIL and UNICEF also continue to support the National Commission for War-affected Children in the development of an effective operating concept for its trauma healing centres.

35. In the meantime, UNAMSIL, UNICEF and the Government are cooperating with child protection non-governmental organizations to address the growing problem of street children, through the use of existing mechanisms for family tracing and reunification. UNAMSIL and UNICEF are also providing technical advice to the Government in the preparation of its next report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. UNICEF is also assisting in the drafting of a child rights bill. Also, in a joint initiative of UNAMSIL and UNICEF, a child-friendly version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report has been prepared and will be launched in the near future, together with the official report. In cooperation with the Special Court, UNAMSIL continues to advocate the protection of child witnesses during and following trials.

C. Gender issues

36. The Mission, in collaboration with its partners, has raised the profile of women's rights in Sierra Leone through sustained training and awareness-raising programmes. The newly established Law Reform Commission is working with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to ensure that discriminatory laws against women are reviewed and brought into line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The participation of women in the governance of the country is gradually increasing. In the meantime, the establishment of family support units in all district police stations has brought about additional protection and support for the victims of sex and gender-based violence, and has enabled more women to report cases of sexual abuse. The performance of the justice system is also improving in this regard, as evidenced by an increase in the number of convictions and the imposition of prison sentences for gender-based violence and related offences.

D. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

37. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has completed its operational mandate. Over 8,000 statements have been collected and documented on the issues, events and violations of human rights that occurred during the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone. The final report of the Commission is expected to be released in September.

E. Special Court for Sierra Leone

38. Following the commencement on 3 July of the trial of the three members of the former Civil Defence Force (CDF), the Special Court for Sierra Leone continued with the trial of the three former RUF members, which opened on 5 July. The second session of the trial of the CDF members is scheduled to commence on 8 September, while the trial of members of the former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) is to begin at a later date. Meanwhile, the Government has authorized the Court to use the premises of the former Brookfields Hotel as additional temporary housing for witnesses.

39. In July 2004, the Special Court entered its third year of operation. The financial uncertainty under which the Special Court operated during the first two years owing to the shortfall in voluntary contributions has been temporarily addressed by the United Nations through the approval of a $16.7 million contribution to fund the Court from July to December. At its fifty-ninth session, the General Assembly will receive my report providing information on the status of this contribution and I will seek approval for a further subvention grant for 2005. The budget for the third fiscal year of the Special Court amounts to approximately $29 million.

40. The Court remained engaged in outreach activities, explaining its mandate and activities to the public and to officials from concerned State institutions, such as law enforcement officers. In addition to the ongoing sensitization campaign in Sierra Leone, the Registrar of the Court visited Liberia from 13 to 15 July to brief civil society, the National Transitional Government of Liberia, the National Transitional Legislative Assembly and UNMIL about the work of the Court, its role in Sierra Leone and how these responsibilities relate to Liberia.

41. The Special Court is also developing an exit strategy. To this end, the Registrar will hold a round of consultations with the management committee and the United Nations in September 2004.

VII. Humanitarian issues and national recovery

42. The repatriation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of Sierra Leonean refugees, mainly from Guinea and Liberia, was completed on 21 July 2004. Since the repatriation exercise began in 2001, UNHCR has repatriated 179,000 refugees, with 25,913 Sierra Leonean nationals repatriated in 2004. A further 92,000 refugees returned unassisted, and close to 15,000 Sierra Leonean nationals opted to stay in other countries and integrate into their host communities. The repatriation of Liberian refugees from Sierra Leone is

scheduled to begin on 1 October 2004 and is expected to continue into 2006. Sierra Leone continues to host approximately 66,000 Liberian refugees, some 55,000 of whom are currently living in eight camps in the southern and eastern parts of the country, with the remaining 11,000 residing in urban centres and in the border areas of Kailahun and Pujehun districts. The United Nations transitional support teams are helping the Government to assist vulnerable communities by ensuring a durable reintegration of returning populations. The United Nations transitional support teams are also identifying needs and priorities in order to help ensure that relief activities are in line with longer-term development activities.

43. In the meantime, progress continues to be made in the education and health sectors. Programmes to increase the number of trained teachers are ongoing. At the start of the 2003/2004 academic year, approximately 50 per cent of primary school teachers required additional training. Primary school enrolment increased to 1,110,000 pupils during the 2003/2004 academic year, an increase of 15 per cent, which highlights the need for additional capacity to absorb the growing number of pupils. Health services have gradually improved, with functional referral hospitals in almost all districts. Notwithstanding the above, the health sector remains beset by capacity constraints, including shortages in qualified staff, and poor access to resources, medication and medical equipment. The establishment of nursing schools in the north and east of the country is expected to lead to an increase in the availability of qualified staff in those areas.

44. Programmes to prevent and reduce HIV/AIDS, which has a prevalence rate of 3.4 per cent in Sierra Leone, are gradually expanding. However, diagnostic facilities and counselling services for those infected remain limited owing to the lack of resources. Also, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the pandemic among vulnerable groups and medical personnel.

45. The need to maintain humanitarian monitoring and early warning mechanisms is crucial, especially in view of the drawdown of the Mission. While the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is phasing out of Sierra Leone, it will retain a humanitarian cell within the Office of the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator. A senior humanitarian affairs officer will provide advice on humanitarian issues to the Resident Coordinator and support the United Nations country team in drawing up humanitarian contingency plans for the future.

46. The state of the national economy, inflation and current exchange rates will require particular attention in 2004 and 2005. With petroleum prices continuing to rise in the first half of 2004 and subsequent increases in the prices of rice and other basic commodities, the national currency exchange rate has been under considerable pressure. The average inflation rate for the period from January to June reached 14.6 per cent. There has also been a sharp spike in domestic interest rates to approximately 10 per cent, from an average of 7 per cent in 2003. To ensure price stability, it will be necessary to further reduce the need for domestic bank financing of Government deficits through reduced recurrent spending.

47. Sustaining a high rate of real growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in Sierra Leone is likely to become more challenging as assistance for post-conflict needs is being scaled back by the donor community. New domestic investments, which are necessary for growth, could diminish if post-conflict emergency aid is not followed up by adequate longer-term donor assistance and development. Sustained high

growth in the future will also require continued policy reforms. In this context, key priorities for sound macroeconomic policies include: identification of Government strategies for poverty reduction through the poverty reduction strategy paper which outlines national priorities for poverty reduction; strengthening of the investment climate; implementation of the divestiture programme; trade reform; strengthening of property rights; and substantial reduction in corruption.

48. In the agricultural sector, the production of rice in the country increased to 82 per cent of the pre-war level, but this represents only 50 per cent of current domestic demand. Despite growth in agricultural production, Sierra Leone continues to rely heavily on imports to satisfy much of its staple food requirements. Continued high prices for food items, high unemployment and low levels of income have reduced access to food, which particularly affects women and children. Much-needed growth in agriculture and trade is impeded by poor road networks, low productivity in traditional farming and inadequate budgetary support. There are still a high number of vulnerable chiefdoms, mostly located in the northern and eastern provinces.

49. It is expected that the draft poverty reduction strategy programme will be completed by the end of September 2004, for approval by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and that the budget for key poverty reduction interventions will be completed in time for the Consultative Group meeting scheduled to be held in Paris in November 2004. It is also expected that, after completion of the national poverty reduction strategy, the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework will be revised so that it is aligned with and supports national priorities for poverty reduction.

VIII. Regional aspects

50. The leaders of the countries members of the Mano River Union, namely, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, continued to exchange visits and held consultations during the reporting period. These developments have been helpful in improving bilateral relations among the three countries, as well as the prospects for the resuscitation of the Union structures. Bilateral consultations arising from the decisions of the Mano River Union Summit, held in Conakry in May 2004, continue to focus on cross-border issues and the subregional disarmament of combatants.

Cooperation with other peacekeeping operations

51. During the period under review, UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI have continued their efforts to establish mechanisms for cross-border and intermission cooperation. The three missions took part in the second regional meeting on the harmonization of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in West Africa, held in Dakar on 5 and 6 August 2004, under the auspices of the United Nations Office for West Africa. In addition to sharing information and experience in regard to current disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practices in the subregion, and especially those that impact upon security, discussions focused on formulating basic principles and guidelines for a regionally harmonized approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in West Africa. Other key issues of joint focus pertained to national ownership of disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration programmes and the desirability of strong technical assistance within the national commissions for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the need to include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in a framework acceptable to all parties in peace agreements, the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and agreements, and the expansion of the arms-for-development programmes of UNDP to the post-conflict countries and to neighbouring States. The proliferation of weapons was also discussed with a view to devising practical recommendations on the most effective ways to minimize the negative regional effects of this problem. In the meantime, practical cooperation among the missions is continuing, especially in such areas as information-sharing, cross-border liaison, transfer of surplus assets and exchange of support personnel.

IX. Mission support issues

52. On the administrative side, the focus has been on supporting the operations of UNAMSIL while simultaneously carrying out liquidation activities and establishing arrangements for a smooth transition to the UNAMSIL residual presence. For reasons of security and given the problems in finding a single suitable premises where all of the various UNAMSIL components could be located in Freetown, it would be preferable that UNAMSIL remain at its current headquarters location at the Mammy Yoko Hotel. In the meantime, the co-deployment of UNAMSIL civilian, military and civilian police personnel throughout the country as integrated administrative entities has been successful, to the mutual benefit of all components.

53. The implementation of the drawdown plan for UNAMSIL has created considerable additional tasks for the administrative component of the Mission, owing to the need to simultaneously conduct the repatriation, rotation and relocation of contingents and expansion of the transit camps for repatriation purposes. These activities have been undertaken during the rainy season when many roads are impassable and personnel had primarily to be transported using UNAMSIL air assets. Furthermore, during the reporting period, the Mission moved by trucks over 250 containers of contingent-owned equipment to the seaport.

54. The Mission has also handed over several of its camp sites to the Government of Sierra Leone. In addition, Government-owned premises, as well as schools, hospitals, community centres and religious buildings that were used by UNAMSIL, are being handed back to the appropriate authorities after most facilities were restored and upgraded where possible by the Mission.

55. Environmental protection is given particular attention in the areas that are being vacated. The Mission is ensuring that all United Nations and contingent-owned equipment is disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner and that the local authorities issue certificates of clearance in this regard. In addition, UNAMSIL is working in close coordination with Headquarters to determine the best options available to dispose of the 23 armoured personnel carriers that were destroyed after being captured by RUF during the May 2000 crisis.

X. Financial aspects

56. The General Assembly, by resolution 58/308 of 18 June 2004, appropriated the amount of $207.3 million gross for the maintenance of UNAMSIL for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1537 (2004), a revised budget which reflects changed requirements for the same period has been prepared and submitted to the Assembly for its consideration during the main part of its fifty-ninth session.

57. As at 31 July 2004, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNAMSIL amounted to $140 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $2,478.7 million.

XI. Observations and recommendations

58. The overall gradual progress and stable political environment in Sierra Leone has continued to facilitate the consolidation of peace in the country. With the support of UNAMSIL and development partners, the Government of Sierra Leone has made significant progress towards accomplishing a number of benchmarks for the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. Notably, revenue from the export of diamonds has significantly increased as the capacity of the Government to monitor and control mining activities in the country has improved. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme has been successfully completed and State authority is being consolidated, albeit not without difficulty. The overall environment has also permitted a slow increase in economic and commercial activity throughout the country.

59. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to achieve long-term stability and recovery, particularly with regard to the security sector. The lack of adequate logistical support and field accommodation continues to prevent the much-needed nationwide deployment of the Sierra Leone police, while RSLAF still remain a weak element. In particular, serious shortfalls in logistics and infrastructure have continued to hamper the operations of the army. In this regard, on 25 August, I sent letters to potential donors, drawing their attention to the need to provide urgent assistance to RSLAF, with an attachment containing a list of the equipment required by RSLAF. It is hoped that potential donors will give due consideration to contributing generously towards the enhancement of the capacity of RSLAF.

60. While considerable progress has been made towards national economic and social recovery, in order to sustain the peace consolidation process and to facilitate the smooth transition from recovery to sustainable development, continued support needs to be given to particularly vulnerable areas of the country so that all regions of Sierra Leone can benefit from the transition.

61. It is encouraging to note that the Government of Sierra Leone has continued to make concerted efforts towards promoting democratic governance, an important example of which was the recent establishment of local councils. However, there are a number of considerable challenges to be met as the Government strives to decentralize its administration. The administrative and service delivery capacity of the local councils is likely to be hampered by the lack of adequately trained staff, logistics and infrastructure. The assistance of the international community in this critical area remains vital.

62. Equally, the Government continues to face challenges in the restoration of the rule of law and the promotion of human rights. Penal and judicial reforms need to be undertaken if the judiciary is to contribute to ongoing efforts to address the residual aspects of the conflict. Poor socio-economic conditions, compounded by the high rate of youth unemployment, are factors that require urgent attention in order to preserve the current relative stability of the political and security environment in the country.

63. Despite the many remaining challenges described above, the ongoing efforts to stabilize Liberia are having a positive impact on the situation in the Mano River Union subregion. The recent efforts made by the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Gyude Bryant, to improve bilateral relations with neighbouring countries are highly commendable. Recent high-level contacts between Guinea and Sierra Leone with a view to identifying a solution to the territorial issue concerning the border town of Yenga are also promising. Leaders of the subregion are encouraged to continue building upon these positive developments and to undertake steps to enhance dialogue among the Mano River Union member States in order to revitalize the organization and ensure that it becomes an important instrument for promoting subregional security and stability.

64. In the meantime, and in order to continue with the gradual drawdown of UNAMSIL and to ensure a seamless transition from the current configuration of UNAMSIL to its residual presence in Sierra Leone, I recommend that the mandate of the Mission be extended for a period of nine months, until 30 June 2005. Such a residual presence will no doubt contribute to the further stabilization of the country and the subregion.

65. In conclusion, I should like to express my deep appreciation to the countries contributing troops and police, as well as to the Economic Community of West African States, donor countries, and the humanitarian and developmental community for their continued support for peace consolidation in Sierra Leone. I should also like to pay tribute to my Special Representative, Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, as well as to all civilian and military personnel of UNAMSIL for the important contribution that they are making to the efforts to restore lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone: contributions as at 7 September 2004

Country	*Military Observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Civilian police*	*Sector headquarters staff*	*Total*
Bangladesh	15	17	456	2		490
Bolivia	6					6
Canada	5			6		11
China	5					5
Croatia	10					10
Czech Republic	4					4
Denmark	2					2
Egypt	10					10
Gambia	15			4		19
Germany			14			14
Ghana	7	9	620	10		646
Guinea	12	1				13
India				8		8
Indonesia	10					10
Jordan	10	4	121	4		139
Kenya	11	10	1 006	8		1 035
Kyrgyzstan	2					2
Malawi				4		4
Malaysia	10			4		14
Mali	8					8
Mauritius				2		2
Namibia				2		2
Nepal	10	4		4		18
New Zealand	2					2
Nigeria	9	13	1 550	8	55	1 635
Norway				2		2
Pakistan	15	16	3 780	2	41	3 854
Russian Federation	15	4	110	1		130
Senegal				6		6
Slovakia	2					2
Sri Lanka				6		6
Sweden	3			4		7
Thailand	5					5
Turkey				7		7
Ukraine	5	4	631			640

Country	*Military Observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Civilian police*	*Sector headquarters staff*	*Total*
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	15	6		10		31
United Republic of Tanzania	11					11
Uruguay	11					11
Zambia	10	4		10		24
Zimbabwe				6		6
Total	**255**	**92**	**8 288**	**120**	**96**	**8 851**

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Cartographic Section